

THE CHIN HILLS:

A History of the People, our dealings with them, their Customs and
Manners, and a Gazetteer of their Country,

BY

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VOLUME I.



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May as the open season, and expect a week's rain rather before Christmas; after that no more until the end of March, when a few bad days must be looked for. In April four or five days of fairly heavy rain are expected and short heavy storms are looked for in May. The end and especially the commencement of the rains are announced with thunder-storms. In June the rains set in in earnest and are practically incessant until 15th November. The rain is accompanied by a dense mist which envelopes the land, and for days at a time at Haka and Fort White it is impossible to see one's neighbour's house even at a distance of 20 paces.

The registration shows that the rainfall varies considerably in different parts of the hills, and we know that at Kennedy Peak, Fort White, the Imbukklang, and Haka, where heavy primeval forest exists, the rainfall is heavier than at Tiddim, Dimlo, and Falam village, where pine trees are found and where the under vegetation is neither thick nor rank. At Haka and Fort White the rainfall is very similar and is heavier than at any of our other posts. The rainfall registered at Haka was 111.03 inches in 1893 and 92.26 in 1894; a corresponding amount fell at Fort White; and in 1894 approximately one-third less fell at Falam and one-half at Tiddim. It is probable that after ten years' experience the yearly rainfall will average 90 inches at Haka and Fort White, 70 inches at Falam, and 55 at Tiddim.

The following is a list of the birds, beasts, and fishes as yet found in the Chin Hills and streams:—

Animals.

Elephant.	Otter (two kinds).
Rhinoceros (<i>Sumatrensis</i>).	Malayan sun bear (<i>Ursus Malayensis</i>).
Rhinoceros (<i>Sondaicus</i>).	Himalayan black bear (<i>Ursus torquatus</i>).
Bison (<i>Gavæus gaurus</i>).	Wild dog (<i>Cuon rutilans</i>).
Gyal (<i>Gavæus frontalis</i>).	Badger.
Tsine (<i>Gavæus Sondaicus</i>).	Porcupine.
Sambur (<i>Rusa Aristotelis</i>).	Armadillo (true name <i>manis</i>).
Thamin (<i>Rusernes Eldii</i>).	Hoolook (<i>Hylobates hoolook</i>).
Barking deer (<i>Cervulus aureus</i>).	Different species of <i>Macacus</i> (short-tailed monkeys).
Ghooral (<i>Nemorhædus</i>).	Different species of <i>Semnopithecus</i> (long-tailed monkeys).
Serow (<i>Nemorhædus bubalina</i>).	Hare (very large).
Hog-deer (<i>Axis porcinus</i>).	Flying squirrel.
Tiger (<i>Felis tigris</i>).	Ordinary squirrel.
Panther (<i>Felis leopardus</i>).	Pig (<i>Sus cristatus</i>).
Marbled tiger cat (<i>Felis marmorata</i>).	Rats, moles, and various rodents.
Wild cat (<i>Felis chaus</i>).	
Civet cat, of varieties (genus <i>Viverra</i>).	
Toddy cat.	

Game birds.

Bamboo partridge.	Snipe (fantail and pintail).
Wood partridge (varieties).	Teal (common).
Chinese francolin.	Teal (whistling).
Kallige pheasant (black-breasted).	Golden plover.
The grey bellied tragopan.	Button quail.
Argus pheasant (<i>Polypectron</i>).	Rain quail (occasionally).
Fire-backs (two or three kinds).	Imperial pigeon.
Hume's pheasant.	Green pigeon (three kinds, including the pintailed).
Jungle fowl.	Speckled wood-pigeon.
Woodcock.	
Wood-snipe.	

whilst the Nwengals were in an excitable state. This news I telegraphed to Rangoon and prepared to return to Fort White by the next convoy. That evening, however, I received a telegram from the Officer Commanding Fort White stating that a catastrophe had occurred, that the Myoök had gone out to meet Twum Tong and had been ambushed, and that he and the majority of the escort were reported cut up. After telegraphing to all stations in the Chin Hills and warning all officers along the border, I left Kalemio accompanied by Mr. Tuck, Mr. Fowler, and Lieutenant Firth, and, marching throughout the night, I reached Fort White the following morning.

The following narrative explains Maung Tun Win's actions and what had occurred since his departure from Falam:—

Maung Tun Win duly arrived at Fort White and sent messengers to Twum Tong saying that he was authorized to offer him a pardon on condition that he surrendered 150 guns, on account of his village only, and that he was willing to meet him and discuss matters at Mobingyi or any other convenient place. Messages were then freely exchanged, principally regarding the meeting-place. Eventually the Myoök and Twum Tong agreed on Pomba village (the home of all the Siyin police) and the date fixed was 9th October, and word was brought in that the Sagyilain, Darbôn, and Mobingyi Chiefs had all promised to attend the meeting, which would take the form of a feast.

The Myoök was an officer of great experience with the Chins and he had with him my whole staff of interpreters and others, including Aung Zan, a Chin by birth, and Aung Gyi, who had spent 15 years in these hills; these men knew the Chin character thoroughly and I had the greatest faith in their opinion. None of these persons suspected the slightest treachery; the Myoök sent money to buy pigs for the feast, whilst Aung Gyi sent out money at the same time to buy a rhinoceros horn.

At 6 A.M., on the 9th October, the Myoök, accompanied by Aung Zan, Aung Gyi, another Burman, and also by two Chin policemen, one of whom carried his rifle, and escorted by 30 rifles of the 1st Burma Rifles under the command of Havildar Harrak Singh Gurung, left Fort White for Pomba. Captain Caulfeild, knowing the nature of the meeting, had given an unusually large escort. At about noon Karmtut,¹ a Kanhow, came to the post and informed Captain Caulfeild that treachery was intended and that he had come to warn the Myoök from going to Pomba. Captain Caulfeild at once despatched Lieutenant Henegan with reinforcements to join the Myoök. Meanwhile the Myoök's escort had proceeded along the old Fort White road divided into an advanced guard, main body and rear-guard, the Myoök riding behind the advanced guard and at the head of the main body.

At old Fort White Siyin Chins met the party and informed the Myoök that Twum Tong was awaiting him at Pomba, and they then left taking a short cut over the hills under pretence of preparing Twum Tong for his reception, but in reality to warn the ambushers of the approach of the party and to take up their own positions. The little party continued its route, passed through old Fort White, and was proceeding in single file along the narrow track leading round the hillside to Pomba, when suddenly a heavy volley was poured into it from three sides out of the high grass and tangled undergrowth and at a range of a few feet only; the volley was succeeded by brisk independent firing. The advanced guard was mown down with the exception of one man, whose cap was shot off his head, and the Myoök,² Aung Gyi,³ Aung Zan,⁴ and the other Burman were all lying dead together with half the main body of the escort. The Chins now rushed in and the fight developed into a hand-to-hand struggle, the most advanced sepoy fighting with clubbed rifles, whilst those in the rear fired as fast as possible, but the little

¹ Karmtut received a present of a gun and a reward in money for his services on this occasion.

² Myoök Maung Tun Win was a young Arakanese, who was appointed to the Chin Hills in 1889; he served with great credit in the Chin-Lushai expedition of 1889-90. He assisted Captain Rundall throughout 1891 and was present at the attack of Tunzan. He accompanied the Kanhow column to Manipur and the Nwengal column on its relief march to Lushai and thence to Chittagong. He was a most excellent officer in every respect, being zealous, honest and plucky. His death was greatly deplored by all officers connected with the Chin Hills, both Military as well as Civil.

³ Aung Gyi was a Burman and had served as interpreter to the several Political Officers since 1888.

⁴ Aung Zan was a 'tame' Chin and a resident of Ateywa; he had served since 1888 as interpreter.

As the houses of all are built on the same general principles and vary in size and quality according to the wealth or poverty of the owner, it is necessary only to describe the house of the Haka.

Description of a Haka house.

The house is one-storeyed, built of plank, with a thatch roof, and is 20 feet high by 50 to 200 feet long and some 30 feet broad, according to the position and affluence of the owner. It has no windows or chimneys and the smoke escapes as it can.

It is built off the ground and underneath is the pig and cattle pen. In front is a long platform and the house is divided into a front verandah and front room, a back room, a closet and a back verandah.

It must be borne in mind that the village is built on the side of a hill, and therefore when the house rests some 3 feet off the ground on the up-hill side it is perhaps 15 and 20 feet off the ground and supported by long posts on the down-hill side. The props which support the house are firmly placed and the floor is always even in spite of the enormous slant of the hillside.

In front of the house is a yard quite flat and cut out of the side of the hill. A raised platform from 20 to 100 feet in length occupies the whole length of the lower side and is supported by long posts like the lower side of the house. This platform is railed so as to prevent small children and drunken men falling 15 or 20 feet into the next-door neighbour's compound. It is used by the men to sit, loll about and drink, when they are not busy, and by the women to weave on in warm weather.

The floor of this platform is made of pine planking, the boards being inferior to those used in the flooring of the house, which are particularly noticeable for their great length and breadth and which are fitted together with skill and without the assistance of nails.

The Wunthu Chief's house, which is accounted the finest in the hills, is planked with enormous and faultless boards, the largest measuring 5 feet 4 inches in breadth, and is of great length.

Pine is the most common planking used, but walnut, teak, and other wood is not uncommon in the south, whilst a red wood which resembles mahogany was formerly greatly used for the floors of the Siyin and Sokte Chiefs houses.

The roof of the house protrudes or overhangs the front verandah, which is enclosed on three sides and decorated with the skulls of animals hung in rows on the walls and piled up on the ground.

Sometimes as many as 300 skulls are found in this verandah and represent not necessarily the game killed by the owner of the house, but also that killed by his father and even his grandfather before him. Amongst these trophies are found the skulls of elephants, rhinoceros, bison, gorral, serrao, deer of several kinds, bear, boar, monkeys, also heads of large cat-fish and mahseer, skulls of the hornbill, vulture, and eagle, and odds and ends, such as the gall-bags of animals, honey-comb and feathers.

The heads of human beings are never brought inside the village or placed among these trophies; they are always stuck on posts outside the village.

In the south the heads of tigers and panthers are not placed in the collection in the verandah and are not brought into the village, but the Northern Chins hang up these heads in common with the others inside their houses.

Besides the heads of wild animals the skulls of domestic mithun buffalo, pigs, goats, and dogs which have been killed at feasts are included in the collection of skulls.

hills, but Wunhla in the Southern Chin Hills is the only village which has made its name famous for ironwork.

The blacksmith's forge consists of two bamboo bellows made out of two large bamboos standing upright with the pistons made of bamboo and cock's feathers and worked by hand; charcoal is used for the furnace, and the anvil consists of a block of stone or a log of wood covered with a sheet of iron.

The weapons are all neatly made, but the science of tempering metal is unknown. Native blacksmiths can make any portion of a flint-lock gun except the barrel, and although the springs which they make are weak and often snap, they nevertheless are often found in the gun-locks.

The melting of brass and telegraph wire is universally practised, and armlets and bangles are made by pouring the molten metal into moulds made of a mixture of paddy-husks and clay.

The telegraph-insulator, which is made of steel, is much prized by the Chin, who quickly fashions it into an excellent knife blade, which takes a capital edge, but which is very brittle.

In the Southern Hills is made a brass and bead head-dress for the wife of a Chief to wear on important occasions. Its construction displays the neatness and accuracy with which Chins bore metal with a rough drill.

The manufacture of brass hair-pins, earrings, bangles, armlets, and metal beads is carried on chiefly in the villages far south of Haka and in the Klang-klang, Whenoh, and Yahow villages which border on the Lushai country.

Earthen pots are made everywhere for holding water and liquor; the pots are dried in the sun and then baked; pottery is the work of women.

Rain coats and rain hats are made everywhere; but Rawvan in the south is most noted for this industry and also for the superior class of the article. The coat is made out of the bark of a tree and the hat is made of bamboo, bark, and date-palm leaves.

Trade.

The Chin, alive as he is to his own interests, is not a born trader like the Burman, and before our occupation the staple trade

Exports.

of the Hills, if we except the barter of bees-wax for salt, which was carried on to some extent by the Falam Chiefs with the Sawbwa of Kale, was the raiding and ransoming of Burman captives, which brought to the Chin, with but little trouble or risk, guns, gongs, salt, iron and any other luxury he desired. Money earned by carrying for the Commissariat Department, and by labour on public works, has now taken the place of slaves and plunder, and the exports in kind from the Hills remain as heretofore practically *nil*, save from those villages far away from our posts, whence bees-wax, "pet," the outside husk of the ear of the Indian-corn, which is largely used by the Burmans for covering cheroots, cane mats, and the horns of buffalo, deer, and other animals are exported. Of these the most valuable are tusks and the horns of the rhinoceros, the latter having a ready sale for use as medicine. The price of a fair-sized horn is as much as Rs. 100.

Imports.

The principal articles of the import trade, which is by far the more important, are salt and iron, which are the only two things absolutely necessary to the Chin, and what may be termed luxuries, such as cattle, especially buffaloes, gongs, brass and iron pots, beads, ornaments of various kinds both of brass and white-metal, silk thread, coloured cotton yarn, yaw plaids, and, in time of scarcity, rice. The

Prospects of sport in the hills.

We have had so much punitive work during the few years of our occupation that we have had but little chance of sport and have acquired but small experience of the best places to find it. However, it may be useful to new-comers to record the habitat of the various species of game, which has been ascertained during many months of wanderings throughout the length and breadth of the entire tract.

Elephants are now only found along the whole length of the Burma border, in the south-west corner of the district, and in the north and in the valleys of the Tuivai and Tuivel streams.

There is an elephant road from the Tuivai river across the hills into Assam, which is used yearly.

Tiger and panther are found more frequently in the Northern Chin Hills than elsewhere; they are fairly numerous on the eastern slopes of the Letha range, and the vicinity of Lenacot, Sinnum, and Mwelpi villages is noted for the presence of these animals.

Bears are found in large numbers on the Imbukklang, the Letha range, the hills to the west of Rawywa, and on all densely wooded ranges.

Bison are always to be found on the Tuimong, Tuivai, Tuivel, Tuinan, and other streams in the neighbourhood of latitude 24° and between the Manipur river and the Lushai border, also on the Imbukklang.

Rhinoceros are found on the Letha range and in the valleys on the east; also on the Imbukklang and in the Tuimong and Tuinan country.

Pig are found wherever there is a large forest and at all altitudes. Serrao are found on the high hills, especially in the north, and gorral are numerous near Fort White, Sagyilain, and on the steep cliffs of the Manipur river at Kunchaung.

Barking deer are found everywhere and sambur are numerous, notably in the large forests on the Imbukklang, Lunglen, the Letha range, and the Webula, which is the favourite shooting-ground of the Tashons; but they are to be found in almost every nullah in secluded tracts, such as in the uninhabited tract east of the Letha range and the uninhabited tract west of the Manipur river and north of the Nwengal villages of Mwial and Laitwi.

In hunting large game, sitting up over water, lying in wait for game as it returns from the lowlands in the early morning, and tracking or quietly working nullahs are the only tactics to be followed. In shooting small game, however, unless accompanied by dogs, the sportsman will see practically nothing as all birds, whether pheasant, partridge, wood-cock, or jungle-fowl, lie very close. With good dogs very fair sport can be found everywhere.

In the Northern Hills excellent sport can be had by driving the nullahs for pheasant, hare, and partridge, the nullahs around Sagyilain, Toklaing, Tavak, and Nashwin (deserted) being full of game. To beat these nullahs some 30 heaters are required, and small boys in preference to men should be requisitioned, as not only are they excellent at the work, but they thoroughly enjoy it. The nullahs around Saiyan and Wunkathe are barren of game. Good sport is obtainable round Tunzan in the north.

A moderate quantity of wood-cock is found throughout the hills, especially around Haka, in January, February, and March; they may be got in any stream, nullah, or wood, and all places seem equally good.